Polygamist Communities Support Women Making Own Marital Decisions

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By Owen A. Allred

I appreciate the efforts of state Sen. Ron Allen in his attempts to try to institute laws regulating marriages for the well being of our daughters in Utah. However, all through the ages of time there have been efforts to govern the thinking of mankind.

Human beings have the ability and willingness to think for themselves. Any successful government has been based upon the recognition of man's free agency. Efforts to curtail free thought and control the mind of man result in slavery. Even in slavery, the mind of the slave has the right and ability to think and recognize the difference between just and unjust regulations and treatment.

Since the beginnings of religious thought upon the Earth, different men have always come among the people and attempted to influence by force, and it has not succeeded.

But where religion has been influenced by reason and long−suffering and patience, much success has been accomplished. Our saviour came into this world for the precise purpose of teaching human beings the value of reasoning, thinking, free choice and loving one's fellow men and women. But many worldly governments have insisted that they have a better way and want to force people to think the way they are told to think. This has obviously been far from successful.

In Utah and elsewhere, our young women are free to cohabit with their boyfriends, with no provision for legal punishment. On the contrary, the state has been willing to not only support a child born out of wedlock, but to also feed, clothe and house that child. If that mother wants to be married to her boyfriend, it is all right for her to be married provided she is at least 16 years of age.

If a marriage takes place, the state has no further interest in it. But the state will provide for mother and child if the mother remains single. If the girl marries a man already married, then she has committed a heinous crime in the eyes of the state. If she remains single and he, although married to another, is the father of her child, she will be supported and cared for by the state. But should she marry that man, both she and the father of her child are breaking the law. It is not the cohabitation, therefore, that broke the law, it is having gotten married.

If that woman is 18 years old or over, and she wants to join a man's family and marry him, then she is immediately breaking the law. So again, the marriage is the crime. Isn't something wrong here?

Again, the man who wants several women to be his sexual partners can have children by them, and the state will help support those children. He remains free of any legal accusation −− until he marries more than one wife. Marry them, and he becomes a criminal. It is the marriage that becomes the crime.

From my childhood through to my older years, the principle of virtue was a beautiful, wonderful thing; it was sought after and defended with great valor. Today, virtue means nearly nothing and is out of harmony with modern life. In connection with that, some laws of the land tend to encourage promiscuity rather than promote virtue.

Clear back in the beginning of this world, marriage was considered a sacred relationship. It was said, "That which God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Today it is said, cohabit all you want, and if you have children by more than one mother, by all means don't stoop to marry those mothers. However, marriage may break a civil law, but not the law of God whose marriage structure is clearly exemplified in the scriptures, and there are many who have religious conscience about that.

Being strong believers in the Prophet Joseph Smith, we adhere to his words that the "fullness of the gospel [as restored through the Prophet] will never be taken from the Earth again." Further, that there would be those gathered together who would "put righteousness to the fore" and live all of the restored gospel, which includes the perpetuation of priesthood authority to authenticate marriages and other ordinances before God. Do the prophets and their prophecies have to be corrected, as has been attempted over these past few years?

I want the Utah Legislature to understand that we are not opposed to laws preventing parents or anyone else using force or intimidation to get a girl to marry against her will before she is of the age of 18 − or at any age. Our children are entitled to their free agency, their freedom of choice for marriage. Free agency is one of the greatest gifts that God has given to mankind.

Let us give our children that right and let them choose for themselves the way of life they want to live. If they are of the age of accountability, then for goodness sake let them choose the husband they want and the husbands choose the wives they want. Let no one control the mind and will of another, or we have reverted to mental slavery.

I want to again commend Sen. Allen on his efforts to protect our children. I am 100 percent in favor of it. But don't condemn marriage; let God be the judge of that. Let virtue garnish the souls of our daughters, and let virtue and morality be taught in their homes in their childhood from the time they are little children. This should be done in the homes in love and kindness toward our children. Attempts to legislate morality have never been a viable recourse. Please quit trying to do it. We cannot force the human mind.

We realize that the present attempts are, of course, an effort to destroy the principle of celestial or plural marriage. It will never happen, any more than you can control the thinking of a human being. I would rather see people gain understanding through patience, education and harmony involving freedom of religion and conscience.

I understand there is some discussion about requiring every man and woman to be married to have a marriage license. I couldn't agree more. I would love to have every marriage in the state recorded by the state. But how in the world can it be done when it is a crime to be married? I would love to have each marriage recorded even if for no other reason than for the sake of genealogy.

I am sorry I was given only four to five minutes to talk to the legislative body in its session on Feb. 14. I want to again try to reach the legislators and try to clarify our thinking on this issue. We are not opposed to good law and order and we want to be among the best citizens in Utah. But we do not want the state to dictate to us our religious rights or rites. Marriage to us is a great honor and responsibility and something that God has always honored. Let us have our freedom just as we want you to have yours.

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